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Released Jointly by US EPA and Hawaii State Department of Health

For Immediate Release: June 1, 2015

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EPA and State of Hawaii reach historic settlement with U.S. Navy to upgrade Red Hill storage tanks

Measure to protect Honolulu drinking water supply will only be finalized after public comment period

HONOLULU – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) announced a proposed agreement with the U.S. Navy and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) requiring the military to take measures to minimize the threat of future leaks at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility near Pearl Harbor, Oahu, the site of a major fuel release last year. With 250 million gallons of capacity, the Red Hill underground storage tank facility is the largest of its kind in the world.

"This agreement will ensure the safety of Oahu's drinking water supply, while allowing the Red Hill tanks to remain in use as a resource for our national defense," said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "EPA and the Department of Health will remain vigilant during this long-term effort to protect the public health and Hawaii's precious aquifers."

The agreement, an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) under authority of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and state laws and regulations, commits the military to install improved technologies for fuel release prevention and detection at the facility. All work to be performed will be developed in consultation with and subject to the approval of EPA and DOH, and monetary penalties may be imposed in the event the work is not conducted in accordance with the AOC's deadlines and requirements.

A feasibility study, to be submitted within two years, will look at a range of tank upgrade options that could be implemented. Each of the massive underground storage tanks that are in-service will be upgraded in phases over the following 20 years. In the meantime, the Navy will double the frequency of its tank tightness testing from biennial to annual. Costs of the upgrades are likely to run into the tens of millions of dollars, with better estimates available once the feasibility study is completed.

In January 2014, while refilling Tank 5, the Navy identified a loss of jet fuel from the tank and reported it to DOH, estimating that about 27,000 gallons was released. The Navy drained the tank and collected samples from existing water monitoring wells. Results of samples taken around Tank 5 indicated a spike in levels of hydrocarbons. The Navy increased the frequency of monitoring at a nearby Navy drinking water well, and current monitoring results for the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam water system confirmed they were in compliance with federal and state drinking water standards both before and after the January release.

The agreement requires the Navy and DLA to conduct an analysis of the hydrogeology of the area surrounding the Red Hill facility, study the extent of contamination caused by previous fuel releases, evaluate potential cleanup methods, and assess the risk the facility poses to Oahu's drinking water resources, all within the next two years. Upon the completion of hydrogeological modeling, additional

groundwater monitoring wells will be installed between the Red Hill tanks and the Honolulu Board of Water Supply's drinking water wells.

"The Department of Health is committed to taking measures required to prevent the future releases from all underground storage tanks. In order to address the challenges presented at Red Hill, the U.S. Navy, DLA, EPA and DOH have developed this AOC as a framework basis to deal with this complex challenge," said Keith Kawaoka, DOH's Deputy Director of Environmental Health. "The AOC establishes the process to make well-researched, well-planned and cost-effective improvements to protect the groundwater resources beneath and surrounding the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility."

Red Hill, constructed in the 1940s, is a unique facility in the United States, consisting of 20 underground bulk fuel storage tanks built into a mountain hillside. Each tank is 250 feet tall and 100 feet in diameter, constructed of steel and encased in a minimum of 2.5 to 4 feet of concrete surrounded by basalt bedrock. Each tank has a fuel storage capacity of 12.5 to 12.7 million gallons, giving the facility a maximum capacity of approximately 250 million gallons. Eighteen tanks are currently active, and two are not in use.

The proposed AOC will be available for comment for a period of 30 days, and a public meeting to discuss it will be held on Thursday, June 18, 2015 from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Moanalua Middle School cafeteria, 1289 Mahiole Street, Honolulu. For more information and to submit comments, please visit: [[HYPERLINK "http://www.epa.gov/region9/redhill/"](http://www.epa.gov/region9/redhill/)] and [[HYPERLINK "http://health.hawaii.gov/RedHill"](http://health.hawaii.gov/RedHill)]. After reviewing public comments, EPA and DOH may sign the AOC to make it effective, or may seek to modify it based on information received during the comment period.

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